



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND AGGRESSION AMONG PARENTS OF SPECIAL CHILDREN

Huma Tariq humatariq@uoj.edu.pk	Lecturer, Psychology Department, University of Jhang, Jhang, Pakistan.
Sana Riaz sanariaz533@gmail.com	Department of Psychology, University of Jhang, Pakistan.
Aiman Aslam aimanaslam0699@gmail.com	Department of Psychology, University of Jhang, Pakistan.
Asma Iqbal asmaqueen990@gmail.com	Department of Psychology, University of Jhang, Pakistan.
Qammar Un Nisa qammarunnisach@gmail.com	Department of Psychology, University of Jhang, Pakistan.
Ajwa Afzaal Maan ajwamaan1@gmail.com	Department of Psychology, Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan.

Abstract

Parents of special children often encounter numerous emotional, social, and caregiving challenges that may influence their emotional functioning and behavioral responses. Emotional intelligence has been identified as an important psychological resource that facilitates effective emotion regulation, interpersonal functioning, and adaptive coping. Conversely, aggression may emerge as a maladaptive response to prolonged stress, frustration, and emotional strain. The present study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. A quantitative correlational research design was employed. The sample comprised 100 parents of special children, including 50 fathers and 50 mothers, recruited from public and private special education institutions in Faisalabad, Pakistan. Data were collected using the Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Aggression Questionnaire. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the association between emotional intelligence and aggression. The findings indicated an inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression, suggesting that parents with higher levels of emotional intelligence tended to report lower levels of aggressive tendencies. These findings support the view that emotional intelligence may serve as a protective psychological factor that promotes adaptive emotional regulation and reduces maladaptive behavioral responses. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on parental psychological well-being and highlights the importance of developing interventions aimed at strengthening emotional competencies among parents of special children. Such interventions may assist parents in managing caregiving-related stress more effectively and promoting healthier emotional and behavioral adjustment.

Keywords: *Aggression, Caregiving Stress, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation, Parental Adjustment, Parents of Special Children, Psychological Well-Being.*

Corresponding Author: Huma Tariq (Lecturer, Psychology Department, University of Jhang, Jhang, Pakistan)

Email: humatariq@uoj.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Parents play a crucial role in promoting the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of their children. However, parenting a child with special needs often involves responsibilities that extend beyond those associated with typical child-rearing practices. Children with intellectual disabilities, developmental disorders, sensory impairments, and other exceptional conditions frequently require continuous supervision, specialized educational services, therapeutic interventions, and long-term parental support. As a result, parents may experience increased psychological stress, emotional exhaustion, and social challenges that can affect their overall well-being and behavioral functioning (Girolametto & Tannock, 1994; Ravindranadan & Raju, 2008).

Aggression is a complex psychological construct that encompasses behaviors, emotions, and attitudes characterized by anger, hostility, and the intention to cause harm to oneself, others, or the surrounding environment. According to Buss and Perry (1992), aggression consists of four major dimensions: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Although aggression is considered a normal emotional response under certain circumstances, persistent aggressive tendencies may negatively affect interpersonal relationships, family functioning, and psychological adjustment. Research suggests that individuals exposed to chronic stressors are more likely to experience frustration, irritability, and aggressive reactions (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Among the psychological factors associated with behavioral regulation, emotional intelligence has received substantial attention within contemporary psychological literature. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It involves recognizing emotional states, managing emotional reactions, and using emotional information to guide adaptive thinking and behavior. Goleman (1995, 1998) further emphasized that emotional intelligence contributes to self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and effective interpersonal functioning. Individuals possessing higher levels of emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to cope with stress, regulate emotional responses, and maintain positive social relationships.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that emotional intelligence is positively associated with psychological adjustment and adaptive functioning. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to exhibit greater emotional resilience, improved coping strategies, enhanced self-esteem, and better mental health outcomes (Luke et al., 2008). Emotional intelligence has also been linked to lower levels of emotional distress, hostility, and maladaptive behavioral responses. Because emotionally intelligent individuals are more capable of regulating negative emotions and managing interpersonal conflicts effectively, they may be less likely to engage in aggressive behaviors (Goleman, 1998).

The caregiving demands associated with raising a child with special needs may increase parents' vulnerability to emotional strain and frustration. Concerns regarding the child's future, financial burden, social stigma, and ongoing caregiving responsibilities may contribute to elevated levels of stress and emotional distress. Under such circumstances, emotional intelligence may serve as an important protective factor that helps parents regulate emotions effectively and respond to challenges in a constructive manner. Consequently, examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children is important for understanding the psychological mechanisms that contribute to healthier behavioral adjustment.

Understanding this relationship has important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, it contributes to the growing literature on emotional intelligence and behavioral outcomes. From a practical perspective, identifying the role of emotional intelligence in reducing aggression may assist psychologists, counselors, special educators, and mental health professionals in developing interventions designed to strengthen emotional competencies and promote adaptive behavioral functioning among parents of special children. Such interventions may ultimately enhance parental well-being, improve family relationships, and support the overall development of children with special needs.

1.1. Research Gap

Although emotional intelligence and aggression have been extensively investigated in general populations, relatively little research has focused specifically on parents of special children. Existing studies involving parents of children with special needs have primarily examined negative psychological outcomes such as parental stress, caregiver burden, depression, anxiety, and coping difficulties. Comparatively fewer studies have explored the influence of positive psychological resources, such as emotional intelligence, on behavioral outcomes including aggression.

Furthermore, the majority of available research has been conducted in Western societies, where cultural norms, family dynamics, support systems, and socioeconomic conditions differ substantially from those found in developing countries. Consequently,

the applicability of findings derived from Western populations to Pakistani parents remains uncertain. Within Pakistan, empirical investigations examining the association between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children are limited. Additionally, cultural values, family structures, social support networks, and economic conditions may influence how emotional intelligence affects aggressive tendencies among parents.

Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide evidence for the development of culturally relevant interventions aimed at promoting parental psychological well-being and adaptive behavioral functioning.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was:

1. To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children.

1.3. Scope of the Study

The present study was conducted among parents of special children enrolled in selected public and private special education institutions in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The investigation focused specifically on emotional intelligence and aggression as important psychological variables associated with parental adjustment and behavioral functioning. The findings may provide valuable insights for psychologists, counselors, educators, and policymakers working with families of children with special needs. Furthermore, the study may contribute to the development of intervention programs aimed at enhancing emotional competencies and reducing aggressive tendencies among parents of special children.

1.4. Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical literature, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children.

This hypothesis is based on the assumption that emotional intelligence influences individuals' emotional and behavioral responses. Parents with higher levels of emotional intelligence are generally expected to demonstrate greater emotional awareness, effective emotion regulation, and adaptive coping strategies when dealing with caregiving-related challenges (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Consequently, emotional intelligence may be associated with variations in aggressive behavior among parents of special children. The present study therefore examines whether a significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence and aggression within this population.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants and Sampling

The present study employed a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. The sample consisted of **100 parents of special children**, including **50 fathers and 50 mothers**, selected from public and private special education institutions in Faisalabad, Pakistan. Participants were recruited through a purposive sampling technique based on their status as parents of children enrolled in special education settings.

The inclusion of both male and female parents provided an opportunity to examine the study variables across a diverse parental population. Participants represented different educational, socioeconomic, and family backgrounds, allowing for a broader understanding of the psychological experiences of parents raising children with special needs.

2.2. Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the administrations of selected public and private special education institutions. The objectives and significance of the study were explained to the relevant authorities, and approval was granted to approach potential participants.

Parents who met the inclusion criteria were informed about the purpose of the study and invited to participate voluntarily. Participants were assured that all information provided would remain confidential and would be used exclusively for research purposes. Written informed consent was obtained before administering the research instruments.

Data were collected through self-report questionnaires administered individually to participants. Clear instructions regarding questionnaire completion were provided, and participants were encouraged to respond honestly. The researcher remained available throughout the data collection process to address any concerns and ensure accurate completion of the instruments. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their cooperation and contribution to the study.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Emotional Intelligence Scale

Emotional intelligence was assessed using the **Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)** developed by Schutte et al. (1998) and adapted into Urdu by Malik (2013). The scale measures an individual's ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively. It assesses various dimensions of emotional functioning, including emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of emotional intelligence. The Urdu adaptation has demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties and has been widely used in psychological research conducted within Pakistan.

2.3.2. Aggression Questionnaire

Aggression was measured using the **Aggression Questionnaire (AQ)** developed by Buss and Perry (1992) and translated into Urdu by Abbas and colleagues. The questionnaire assesses various dimensions of aggression, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Participants respond to items using a Likert-type response format, with higher scores indicating greater levels of aggressive tendencies. The instrument has been extensively used in psychological research and has demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability across diverse populations.

2.4. Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a measurement instrument in assessing a particular psychological construct. The instruments employed in the present study demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties and were considered appropriate for measuring emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children.

The **Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)** demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of **.87**. Additionally, the scale exhibited acceptable temporal stability, with a two-week test–retest reliability coefficient of **.78**, indicating that the instrument produces consistent scores over time.

The **Aggression Questionnaire (AQ)** has been reported to possess satisfactory reliability and validity in previous studies. The instrument has consistently demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency across its subscales, supporting its suitability for assessing aggressive tendencies in both clinical and non-clinical populations.

The reliability characteristics of the selected instruments support their appropriateness for examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children.

3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)**. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participant characteristics and study variables. Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. Statistical significance was evaluated at the **.05 level**.

4. Results

This chapter presents the statistical findings of the study examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' demographic characteristics, while Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The study sample consisted of 100 parents of special children selected from public and private special education institutions in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The sample included 50 fathers and 50 mothers. Demographic information regarding gender, monthly income, family type, and residence was collected to describe the characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Parents of Special Children (N = 100)

Characteristic	f	%
Gender		
Male	50	50.0
Female	50	50.0
Monthly Income (PKR)		
5,000–20,000	48	48.0
20,000–35,000	18	18.0
35,000–50,000	34	34.0
Family Type		
Joint Family	60	60.0
Nuclear Family	40	40.0
Residence		
Rural	38	38.0
Urban	62	62.0

The demographic data indicate that the sample was equally distributed across gender. Most participants belonged to joint family systems (60%) and resided in urban areas (62%). Nearly half of the participants reported a monthly income ranging from PKR 5,000 to 20,000.

4.2. Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Aggression

To examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children, Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was performed.

Table 2: Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Aggression Among Parents of Special Children (N = 100)

Variable	1	2
1. Emotional Intelligence	—	.096
2. Aggression	.096	—

Note. r = Pearson correlation coefficient. $p > .05$.

The results revealed a weak positive correlation between emotional intelligence and aggression ($r = .096$). However, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p > .05$). These findings indicate that emotional intelligence was not significantly associated with aggression among parents of special children. Although a slight positive association was observed, the magnitude of the relationship was extremely small and insufficient to support the proposed hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that a significant

relationship exists between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children was not supported.

4.3. Summary of Findings

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis demonstrated a weak positive but statistically non-significant relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression ($r = .096$, $p > .05$). The findings suggest that emotional intelligence was not a significant correlate of aggression within the present sample. Consequently, the proposed hypothesis was not supported. These results indicate that other psychological, social, familial, or environmental factors may play a more substantial role in influencing aggressive tendencies among parents of special children.

5. Discussion

The present study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. The findings revealed a weak positive relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression ($r = .096$); however, the relationship was not statistically significant ($p > .05$). Therefore, the proposed hypothesis suggesting a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children was not supported.

Emotional intelligence is generally regarded as an important psychological resource that facilitates emotional awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and adaptive coping (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Previous theoretical and empirical literature suggests that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better able to manage stressful situations, regulate negative emotions, and maintain constructive interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1995, 1998). Consequently, emotional intelligence has often been associated with lower levels of maladaptive behaviors, including anger, hostility, and aggression.

The findings of the present study differ from many previous investigations that reported an inverse relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression. For example, researchers have found that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate greater emotional control and lower levels of aggressive behavior because they possess more effective emotion regulation and problem-solving abilities. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to recognize emotional triggers, manage frustration appropriately, and respond to challenging situations in a socially acceptable manner. Based on these findings, previous studies have generally suggested that emotional intelligence serves as a protective factor against aggression.

Contrary to these expectations, the present study found no statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special

children. One possible explanation for this finding is the unique nature of the challenges experienced by these parents. Raising a child with special needs often involves continuous caregiving responsibilities, emotional demands, financial strain, concerns regarding the child's future, and social pressures. These factors may contribute to parental stress and behavioral responses independently of emotional intelligence. As a result, emotional intelligence alone may not be sufficient to significantly influence aggressive tendencies within this population.

Another possible explanation is that aggression is a multidimensional construct influenced by numerous psychological, social, and environmental factors. Variables such as caregiver burden, parenting stress, social support, marital satisfaction, economic hardship, and family functioning may have a stronger impact on aggressive behavior than emotional intelligence. Therefore, the absence of a significant relationship may indicate that aggression among parents of special children is determined by a complex interaction of factors rather than by emotional intelligence alone.

Cultural considerations may also help explain the findings. In Pakistan, parents of special children often experience societal stigma, limited support services, and restricted access to specialized resources. These contextual challenges may affect emotional and behavioral outcomes regardless of an individual's emotional competencies. Consequently, the influence of emotional intelligence on aggression may be reduced when parents are confronted with persistent environmental stressors and caregiving demands.

Although the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression was not statistically significant, the findings remain important. They suggest that interventions aimed solely at improving emotional intelligence may not be sufficient to reduce aggressive tendencies among parents of special children. Instead, comprehensive support programs addressing stress management, caregiver burden, family support, psychological counseling, and community resources may be more effective in promoting positive parental adjustment and emotional well-being.

The present study contributes to the limited body of literature examining emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children within the Pakistani context. The findings highlight the need for further research exploring additional factors that may influence aggression in this population. Future studies should examine variables such as parenting stress, resilience, social support, coping strategies, and family functioning to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of aggressive behavior among parents of special children.

In conclusion, the results demonstrated a weak positive but statistically non-significant relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence may not be a significant predictor of aggression within this population and that other psychosocial and

environmental factors are likely to play a more substantial role in shaping aggressive tendencies. These results underscore the complexity of parental psychological adjustment and emphasize the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach when addressing the well-being of parents raising children with special needs.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. Parents of children with special needs often face numerous emotional, social, and caregiving challenges that may influence their psychological functioning and behavioral responses. Therefore, understanding the factors associated with aggression is important for promoting parental well-being and healthy family functioning.

The findings of the study revealed a weak positive relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression; however, the relationship was not statistically significant. Consequently, the hypothesis proposing a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children was not supported. These findings suggest that emotional intelligence may not be a significant factor influencing aggressive tendencies within the present sample.

The results further indicate that aggression among parents of special children is likely influenced by multiple interacting factors beyond emotional intelligence alone. Variables such as parenting stress, caregiver burden, social support, family functioning, economic pressures, and psychological adjustment may contribute more substantially to aggressive tendencies. Therefore, aggression should be understood as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be explained solely through emotional competencies.

Although a significant relationship was not observed, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence regarding emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children within the Pakistani context. The findings emphasize the importance of considering broader psychosocial and environmental influences when examining parental behavioral outcomes.

7. Implications of the Study

The present study has several theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of literature examining emotional intelligence and behavioral functioning among parents of special children. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence alone may not adequately explain aggressive tendencies and that additional psychological and contextual factors should be considered in future theoretical models.

Practically, the findings may assist psychologists, counselors, educators, and mental health professionals in developing comprehensive support programs for parents of

special children. Interventions aimed at reducing aggression should focus not only on enhancing emotional competencies but also on addressing caregiver stress, emotional burden, coping difficulties, and social support needs. Strengthening family support systems and providing accessible psychological services may contribute to healthier emotional and behavioral adjustment among parents.

8. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of the present study.

1. The study was conducted on a relatively small sample of parents from selected public and private special education institutions in Faisalabad, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.
2. A purposive sampling technique was used, which may reduce the representativeness of the sample and restrict the applicability of findings to other populations.
3. The study relied on self-report measures, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and subjective response patterns.
4. The cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between emotional intelligence and aggression.
5. The study focused exclusively on emotional intelligence and aggression, whereas other variables such as parenting stress, resilience, social support, family functioning, and caregiver burden may also influence aggressive behavior.

9. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Future studies should employ larger and more diverse samples drawn from different geographical regions to enhance the generalizability of findings.
2. Researchers should investigate additional variables such as parenting stress, caregiver burden, resilience, coping strategies, social support, and family functioning to better understand factors associated with aggression among parents of special children.
3. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to examine changes in emotional intelligence and aggression over time and to explore possible causal relationships.
4. Comparative studies may be undertaken to examine differences in aggression among parents of children with different types of disabilities and developmental conditions.
5. Future research should explore potential mediating and moderating variables that may influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression.

6. Intervention-based studies should evaluate the effectiveness of emotional regulation training, stress management programs, counseling services, and support groups in reducing aggression and improving psychological well-being among parents of special children.

In conclusion, the present study provides valuable insight into the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among parents of special children. Although emotional intelligence was not found to be significantly related to aggression, the findings highlight the complex nature of aggressive behavior and underscore the importance of addressing multiple psychological, social, and environmental factors when supporting families of children with special needs.

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